

HUMAN RABIES

A Patient's Guide



If you or someone you know has been exposed to Rabies, you probably have many concerns and questions about the virus itself—and about what happens next. This brochure is provided to guide you through the treatment process and give you some general rabies information. This brochure is not a substitute for professional medical attention and your doctor's advice. Exposure to rabies requires medical attention as soon as possible. (Rabies, if treated immediately is preventable!)

For Pre-Exposure Vaccination: Rabies Vaccine

If your job or travel plans place you at risk for rabies exposure, you will need a series of 3 immunizations, given today (day 0), a week from today (day 7), and 3 or 4 weeks from today (day 21 or 28). As long as you are at risk of rabies exposure, it is also recommended you have a blood test every 2 years to determine whether you should get a "booster" immunization.

How Is The Vaccine Administered?

The rabies vaccine is usually administered in the upper arm. Some people experience local reactions such as pain, redness, swelling, and itching at the injection site; headache, nausea, abdominal pain, muscle aches, and dizziness are also possible.

If you are ill or have a fever, pre-exposure rabies vaccination should not be given.

Pre-exposure immunization does not eliminate the need for prompt treatment following an exposure to rabies.
individuals.

What is Rabies

Rabies is a virus that attacks the brain and nervous system. It is transmitted from animal to animal and from animal to human. **If left untreated in humans and animals, rabies is deadly.** It is therefore necessary for you to complete rabies treatment.

How Does the Virus Spread

The rabies virus lives in the saliva of infected animals. Infected animals spread the virus to others by scratching or biting. The virus can also be spread through infected saliva contact with open cuts or wounds, and with the mouth, eyes, and nose.



What is "Exposure" to Rabies

Exposure to the rabies virus means you may have been bitten or scratched by one of a variety of animals known to carry the disease.

In the United States, some of the most common wildlife rabies carriers are bats, skunks, raccoons, foxes, and coyotes. Humans in the United States have the greatest chance of being directly exposed to the rabies virus through contact with unvaccinated cats and dogs, as well as with bats.



How Can Rabies Be Prevented?

There are 2 forms of rabies prevention:

- Pre-Exposure immunization is given to help protect people who might come into future contact with rabies, due to high-risk occupations or travel to countries where rabies is a concern.

- Postexposure treatment is given to anyone who has actually been exposed to the rabies virus—even if they have already received pre-exposure prophylaxis.

Protection!

Who Needs It...

Veterinarians, animal control officers, spelunkers, wildlife handlers, and anyone who works in animal-related industries, such as research laboratory workers.

Travelers to countries where rabies is widespread.

General Public

and When?

Routine pre-exposure vaccination.

Pre-exposure vaccination before departure.

Postexposure treatment, within recommended guidelines, even if animal is merely suspected of having rabies; consult a medical professional immediately

When Should Postexposure Prevention Start?

The only way to prevent rabies after being exposed is by receiving rabies immune globulin together with rabies vaccine, before symptoms appear. In most cases, symptoms can appear anywhere from 20 to 60 days after exposure. However, symptoms have been known to appear much sooner, so immediate medical attention is necessary.

Following the treatment schedule is crucial to preventing rabies symptoms from appearing.